

Amendment

Please amend the claims as follows (additions are underlined and deletions are enclosed in brackets):

- C1
1. (amended twice) A method for introducing cells into an animal to form tissue within the animal comprising:
forming a cell-polymeric composition by mixing ^{cells with} a solution of a biodegradable, biocompatible natural or synthetic organic polymer[,];
introducing said cell-polymeric composition into the animal; and
[wherein the] hardening the polymer [is capable of hardening] into a three-dimensional open-lattice structure which entraps water molecules to form a hydrogel with dissociated cells[; and
introducing said cell-polymeric composition into the animal].
2. (amended twice) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of hardening is performed [said cell-polymeric composition hardens] prior to introduction into the animal.
3. (amended twice) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of hardening is performed [the cell-polymeric composition hardens] after introduction into the animal.

- C2
11. (amended three times) An implant for introducing cells into an animal, said implant being a cell-polymeric composition comprising: a biodegradable, biocompatible natural or synthetic organic polymer, wherein upon hardening, the implant comprises [into] a three-dimensional open-lattice structure which entraps water molecules to form a hydrogel mixed with dissociated cells, said cell-polymer composition being suitable for implantation into an animal.

21. In line 1, please delete "method" and insert --implant-- therefor.

21. In line 1, please delete "thar" and insert --that--therefor.

22. In line 1, please delete "method" and insert --implant-- therefor.

C³ 23.(new claim) The method of claim 1, wherein hardening comprises introducing the cell-polymeric composition into a physiological environment.

24.(new claim) The method of claim 1, wherein hardening comprises exposing the cell-polymeric composition to an in vivo or in vitro environment comprising a hardening-inducing agent.

Remarks

The claimed invention

The invention is a method and implant for introducing cells into an animal. The implants comprises a cell-polymeric composition including a biodegradable, biocompatible natural or synthetic organic polymer which hardens into a three-dimensional lattice structure which entraps water molecules to form a hydrogel with dissociated cells. The amendments to the claims are made to more particularly point and distinctly claim the subject matter of the invention. No new matter is entered by any of these amendments.

Cited art

Atala A and Atala B describe research which was presented at a scientific meeting in 1992 and published in a journal in August, 1993, respectively. Nevo discloses a composition comprising cells and a matrix material which can form a gel for implantation into defects in articular cartilage and bone. Vacanti A discloses a cell-seeded artificial matrix which is implanted into a patient to replace defective or missing cartilage. Vacanti B discloses a cell-seeded matrix for transplanting cells into tissue such as liver, intestine, and pancreas. Schlameus discloses a composition comprising osteoprogenitor cells encapsulated in microcapsules of alginate and optionally poly-L-lysine, which are implanted into a fracture site. Dionne discloses a two part implant having a core containing isolated cells and materials to maintain the cells and